

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00
NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 IO-13 /068 R

DRAFTED BY ARA/ECA:RCGRAHAM:RC
APPROVED BY D: MR. CHRISTOPHER
ARA:FMCNEIL

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 289235

E.O. 11652: GDS

AGS: PGOV, SHUM, UY, US

SUBJECT: DEPUTY SECRETARY MEETING WITH GENERAL VADORA
REF: STATE 268689; MVD 5280

1. DEPUTY SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER MET WITH GENERAL VADORA FOR APPROXIMATELY 50 MINUTES ON NOVEMBER 16. ACCOMPANYING VADORA WERE URUGUAYAN AMBASSADOR PEREZ CALDAS AND MILITARY ATTACHE GENERAL QUEIROLO. DEPARTMENT PARTICIPANTS INCLUDED DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY MCNEIL, DEPUTY COORDINATOR FOR HUMAN RIGHTS SCHNEIDER, URUGUAYAN DESK OFFICER GRAHAM AND INTERPRETER HERVAS.

2. MR. CHRISTOPHER BEGAN WITH AMENITIES BY ASKING ABOUT THE MANAGUA CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN ARMIES. GENERAL VADORA REPLIED THAT IT HAD BEEN A GOOD MEETING WHICH ESPECIALLY DEALT WITH THE ISSUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS. THE DEPUTY SECRETARY THEN STATED THAT HE WAS GLAD TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO TALK WITH GENERAL VADORA ABOUT THE CONFIDENTIAL

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STATE OF BILATERAL RELATIONS. THE VISIT OF PRESIDENT MENDEZ OPENED UP A DIALOGUE WHICH WE ARE PLEASED TO PURSUE. MR. CHRISTOPHER CONTINUED THAT THE ONE SUBJECT WHICH HAS BECOME AN IMPEDIMENT TO BETTER RELATIONS IS THE LACK OF HARMONY ON HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY. MR.CHRISTOPHERADDED THAT WHEN PRESIDENT MENDEZ WAS IN

ASHINGTON HE RAISED OUR EXPECTATIONS THAT THE STATE OF EMERGENCY WOULD BE LIFTED. GENERAL VADORA WAS ASKED WHEN THAT WILL HAPPEN.

3. GENERAL VADORA REPLIED THAT IT WILL TAKE SOME TIME TO REMOVE STATE OF EMERGENCY MEASURES DUE TO THE CONTINUING CONTACTS WHICH SUBVERSIVE GROUPS OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY MAINTAIN WITH ELEMENTS IN URUGUAY. HOWEVER, THE GENERAL ADDED, THESE SECURITY MEASURES DO NOT IMPEDE NORMALIZATION OF OTHER CONDITIONS. AS AN EXAMPLE, VADORA REFERRED TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INFORMATION COMMISSION NOW COOPERATING WITH OUR EMBASSY.

4. MR. CHRISTOPHER ASKED IF THE COMMISSION IS PREPARED TO SUPPLY INFORMATION ON THE CONDITION OF PRISONERS. GENERAL VADORA REPLIED THAT, IN PRINCIPLE, YES. PRISONERS ARE NOT ISOLATED. THEY ARE RECEIVING VISITORS. ANYBODY CAN TALK TO THEM AND FIND OUT THEIR STATE OF HEALTH. AND THE PRISONERS MAY WRITE LETTERS. THE DEPUTY SECRETARY ASKED FOR A CLARIFICATION OF THIS STATEMENT, AS TO WHETHER IT WAS TRUE IN PRACTICE AS WELL AS PRINCIPLE, AND WHETHER IT APPLIED TO INQUIRIES FROM FAMILY AND FRIENDS. GENERAL VADORA REPLIED THAT IN PRACTICE THE PRISONERS MAY RECEIVE LAWYERS, REPRESENTATIVES OF THEIR RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION, AND IMMEDIATE FAMILY MEMBERS. DIRECT CONTACT BETWEEN PRISONERS AND PERSONS IN OTHER CATEGORIES IS NOT CONFIDENTIAL

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PERMITTED. VADORA STATED THAT THESE ARE THE SAME CONDITIONS ACCORDED COMMON CRIMINALS. THE GENERAL WAS THEN ASKED IF THE COMMISSION WILL PUBLISH A LIST THAT WOULD IDENTIFY ALL PRISONERS, THE CHARGES, AND LENGTH OF SENTENCES. HE REPLIED THAT WITHOUT DOUBT SUCH A LIST WOULD BE PUBLISHED.

5. THE DEPUTY SECRETARY EXPLAINED THAT HE WANTED TO BE CLEAR ON WHY WE WERE ASKING THESE QUESTIONS. THEY WERE NOT INTENDED IN THE SPIRIT OF HOSTILITY. RATHER, IT IS USEFUL TO UNDERSTAND AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE THE IMPEDIMENTS TO BETTER RELATIONS. GENERAL VADORA REPLIED THAT THE QUESTIONS WERE NOT OFFENSIVE AND THAT THE ONLY WAY TO RESOLVE ISSUES IS TO DISCUSS THEM WITH CANDOR AND FRANKNESS. MR. CHRISTOPHER THANKED VADORA FOR MAKING THIS STATEMENT.

6. MR. CHRISTOPHER THEN ASKED WHETHER SOME ASPECTS OF OUR CONCERN, SUCH AS LIFTING MEDIA CENSORSHIP AND ANSWERING COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE JUDICIAL PROCESS, COULD NOT BE ADDRESSED PRIOR TO RESOLUTION OF THE OVERALL STATE OF

EMERGENCY QUESTION. GENERAL VADORA REPLIED WITH A DESCRIPTION OF THE ORIGIN OF THE STATE OF EMERGENCY MEASURES, STATING THAT WILSON FERREIRA HAD VOTED FOR THESE MEASURES AS A MEMBER OF THE URUGUAYAN CONGRESS WHICH ADOPTED THEM. WHAT IS UNDER REVIEW BY PRESIDENT MENDEZ IS THE POSSIBILITY THAT THOSE PERSONS ARRESTED

UNDER PROVISIONS OF THE MEASURES MIGHT BE PROCESSED THROUGH CIVILIAN RATHER THAN MILITARY CHANNELS.

7. REFERRING TO THE MEDIA, VADORA STATED THAT GOU ACTIONS HAVE BEEN TAKEN UNDER PROVISIONS OF A PRESS LAW AND THAT THERE IS NO CENSORSHIP IN URUGUAY. HE THEN REFERRED TO THE EL DIA CASE, WHERE ACTIONS AGAINST THE NEWSPAPER WERE TAKEN UNDER SECURITY MEASURES BECAUSE THE MORAL STANDARDS OF THE MILITARY HAD BEEN CONFIDENTIAL

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RIDICULED. MR. CHRISTOPHER ASKED FOR FURTHER CLARIFICATION OF THESE COMMENTS. GENERAL VADORA THEN STATED THAT AS IN THE U.S. THE PRESS IS RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT IT REPORTS, AND MUST BE SURE THAT WHAT IT REPORTS IS TRUE. HE CLAIMED A MEASURE OF PRESS FREEDOM AND CITED AS EVIDENCE CRITICAL REPORTS FROM FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS IN MONTEVIDEO. MR. CHRISTOPHER ASKED SPECIFICALLY WHAT HAPPENED IN THE EL DIA CASE. VADORA REPLIED THAT AN OFFENSIVE REMARK WAS PUBLISHED IN THE CLASSIFIED ADS SECTION OF THE PAPER AND THAT THIS IS NOT ACCEPTABLE UNDER PUBLIC NORMS. THE MANAGING EDITOR, WHO BORE THE ULTIMATE RESPONSIBILITY, WAS NOT A URUGUAYAN CITIZEN, AND WAS THROWN OUT OF THE COUNTRY. MR. CHRISTOPHER REPLIED THAT IN THE U.S. THE PRESS IS FREE FROM GOVERNMENT CENSORSHIP. HE SAID THAT WHILE INDIVIDUALS COULD BRING CIVIL ACTIONS FOR MONEY DAMAGES IF THEY THOUGHT THE PRESS HAD INJURED THEM BY PUBLISHING UNTRUTHS, THE GOVERNMENT COULD NOT PREVENT THE PRESS FROM PUBLISHING WHAT IT LIKED OR PENALIZE IT FOR DOING SO. IN SHORT, HE ADDED THE MEDIA SITUATION HERE IS NOT SIMILAR TO THAT OF URUGUAY AS CLAIMED BY VADORA. GENERAL VADORA NOTED THAT THE DECISION PERMANENTLY TO CLOSE DOWN A NUMBER OF LEFTIST NEWSPAPERS, SUCH AS ESCOBA, WAS TAKEN PRIOR TO THE CURRENT URUGUAYAN ADMINISTRATION.

8. THE DEPUTY SECRETARY NEXT INFORMED GENERAL VADORA THAT THE DECISION TO RELEASE A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF POLITICAL PRISONERS WOULD BE A MAJOR CONTRIBUTION AND ASKED IF THIS WAS FORESEEN. GENERAL VADORA REPLIED THAT THERE WERE NO POLITICAL PRISONERS IN URUGUAY. THOSE NOW IN JAIL WERE PUT THERE PRIOR TO THE CURRENT ADMINISTRATION, UNDER THE EMERGENCY SECURITY MEASURES. THUS, HE ADDED,

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THE OWNER OF THE PRISONERS IS QUOTE SOCIAL JUSTICE UNQUOTE AND NOT THE GOU. ON THIS POINT GENERAL VADORA OBSERVED THAT 185 PRISONERS HAD BEEN FREED IN 1977 BY THE URUGUAYAN COURTS. HE SAID THAT ONLY THE COURTS CAN

RELEASE PRISONERS. VADORA MODIFIED THIS STATEMENT WITH THE COMMENT THAT ANYONE UNDER DETENTION WHO HAD NOT BEEN FORMALLY SENTENCED COULD BE FREED, BUT ONCE SENTENCE IS IMPOSED THEY MUST SERVE THEIR TIME. THUS THE RELEASE OF SENTENCED PRISONERS HE SAID, IS NOT DEPENDENT ON THE GOOD WILL OF PRESIDENT MENDEZ BUT RATHER IS A FUNCTION OF JUDICIAN DECISIONS. IN REPLY TO MR. CHRISTOPHER'S QUESTION ON WHETHER THE PRESIDENT COULD GRANT PARDONS, GENERAL VADORA SAID THAT HE COULD FOR COMMON CRIMINALS AND HAD REQUESTED AUTHORITY TO GRANT PARDONS FOR THOSE HELD UNDER EMERGENCY SECURITY MEASURES.

9. THE DEPUTY SECRETARY REITERATED AT THIS POINT THAT WE WERE PROBING FOR AREAS WHERE WE CAN IMPROVE RELATIONS. STEPS SUCH AS THOSE HE HAD SUGGESTED WOULD HAVE A FAVORABLE EFFECT ON THE U.S. CONGRESS, WHICH MIGHT BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN ITS EFFECT ON THE ADMINISTRATION. MR. CHRISTOPHER CONTINUED THAT OUR POLICY IS TO BE HELPFUL BUT WE DO NOT PRESUME TO DRAW ROAD MAPS FOR THE GOU. GENERAL VADORA INTERRUPTED TO INDICATE THAT THE U.S. CAN BE OF MUCH ASSISTANCE IN PRECISELY THIS WAY, BY DRAWING ROAD MAPS. MR. CHRISTOPHER STATED THAT THE WHOLE ADMINISTRATION LOOKS FORWARD TO THE TIME WHEN WE CAN OFFER ECONOMIC AND SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO THE GOU, AS WELL AS OUR SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTION LOANS TO URUGUAY. HOWEVER, HE WENT ON, OUR PERCEPTION OF CURRENT CONDITIONS IN URUGUAY PERSUADES US THAT WE CANNOT TAKE SUCH STEPS UNTIL THERE HAS BEEN SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS.

10. MR. CHRISTOPHER SAID THAT HE WAS SURE AMBASSADOR PEZZULLO HAD ALREADY TOLD VADORA WHAT HAD BEEN OUTLINED CONFIDENTIAL

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IN THIS MEETING. HE HAD GREAT RESPECT FOR THE AMBASSADOR AND KNEW HIM PERSONALLY TO BE A VIGOROUS EXPONENT OF OUR POLICY. MR. CHRISTOPHER ADDED THAT THE AMBASSADOR WAS ALSO SYMPATHETIC TO THE DESIRES OF THE GOU TO IMPROVE RELATIONS. GENERAL VADORA REPLIED THAT HE CONSIDERED AMBASSADOR PEZZULLO TO BE STRONG AND INTERESTED IN GOOD RELATIONS. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE WAS OPTIMISTIC WE WILL REACH AGREEMENT ON THE ISSUES AND THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THAT IT WAS NOT ONLY THE U.S. CONGRESS, BUT THE PUBLIC AS WELL, WHICH MUST BE CONVINCED OF THE URUGUAYAN RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS.

11. GENERAL VADORA THEN STRESSED THAT THE SITUATION IN HIS COUNTRY IS NOT ONE WHERE SOME GROUP HAS TAKEN OVER THE COUNTRY FOR NARROW PURPOSES. HIS OBJECTIVE IS THAT THE COUNTRY NOT SUFFER CONSTANTLY FROM SUBVERSION. UNLIKE THE POWERFUL U.S. WHICH CAN TOLERATE SO MUCH DISSENT, VADORA CLAIMED THAT URUGUAY COULD RELATIVELY

EASILY LOSE ITS DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS TO SUBVERSION.

12. MR. CHRISTOPHER SAID THAT HE MAINTAINED AN OPEN DOOR POLICY WITH RESPECT TO POLITICAL LEADERS NOT NOW IN GOVERNMENT ROLES. IN THIS CONNECTION, HE HAD RECEIVED WILSON FERREIRA ON NOVEMBER 15. THIS POLICY SHOULD NOT BE MISUNDERSTOOD AS A HOSTILE ACT, AS IT WAS NOT DONE OUT OF LACK OF RESPECT FOR THE EXISTING GOVERNMENT.

13. GENERAL VADORA REPLIED THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THE PRACTICE AND THAT INDEED HE HAD RECEIVED OPPONENTS OF THE USG. HE MENTIONED THAT DURING THE TUPAMARO PERIOD SUBVERSIVE GROUPS HAD CARRIED A BANNER INSCRIBED WITH ANTI-U.S. SLOGANS. OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES ALSO CRITICIZED THE GOU DURING THE SAME PERIOD FOR COMING TOO
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MUCH UNDER U.S. INFLUENCE. THUS, VADORA STATED THAT THE GOU MUST BE CAREFUL, IN THE RESOLUTION OF BILATERAL ISSUES, NOT TO APPEAR TO BE SELLING OUT TO THE U.S. VADORA SAID THAT HE WOULD PROMISE TO DO ALL POSSIBLE WITHOUT REDUCING SECURITY IN HIS COUNTRY. HE INDICATED THAT HE HOPED FOR AN OPENING (WHICH HE DID NOT SPECIFY) THAT WOULD PERMIT NARROWING OF THE GAP BETWEEN THE U.S. AND URUGUAY. MR. CHRISTOPHER REPLIED THAT WHILE IMPROVEMENTS MUST NATURALLY BE CARRIED OUT BY THE GOU IN ITS OWN WAY, WE ARE HOPEFUL THAT SOME SPECIFIC ADVANCES CAN BE MADE IN THE NEAR FUTURE AND THAT AMBASSADOR PEZZULLO WILL BE ABLE TO HELP ACHIEVE THIS IMPORTANT RESULT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 22-Sep-1999 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 03-Dec-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE289235
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: ARA/ECA:RCGRAHAM:RC
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: 11652 GDS
Errors: n/a
Expiration:
Film Number: D770449-0533
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t197712111/baaaaeuoc.tel
Line Count: 253
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 9af35dfc-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 119085
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DEPUTY SECRETARY MEETING WITH GENERAL VADORA
TAGS: PGOV, SHUM, UY, US
To: MONTEVIDEO
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/9af35dfc-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009